Center for Immigration Studies

Backgrounder

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The Jewish Stake in America's Changing Demography

Reconsidering a Misguided Immigration Policy

By Stephen Steinlight

Preface: Challenging A Crumbling Consensus

This piece is the fruit of an authentic and deeply felt conversion experience, but much as one hankers to grab the reader's attention with a dramatic retelling of a great and sudden epiphany, it didn't happen that way. My change of heart, of thought, came gradually, even reluctantly. It was the product of a long evolution, one that occurred incrementally and unevenly over the years I spent as an advocate in the immigration debate who came increasingly to doubt and now, finally, to disown his own case and cause. The conversion is also the result of the consumption of many books and monographs on many aspects of the issue, as well as my own reflections on the innumerable (and often interminable) coalition meetings and conferences I attended on the subject. Writing in the immediate wake of the nightmare America has experienced (I live in Manhattan and watched the second plane strike the World Trade Center), it must be added that the enormities committed by Islamist terrorists in my city, Washington, and Pennsylvania have given these thoughts greatly increased emotional urgency. But they developed unremarkably, slowly, steadily.

Most of all, my conversion is the consequence of my contact over the years with Mark Krikorian, Executive Director of the Center for Immigration Studies, and the Center's work. We dialogued and formally debated on several occasions, and I moderated public forums in which Mark took part. If dialogue has any meaning, if speakers actually listen to each other rather than close their ears and merely wait impatiently to say their say, then the possibility that one can change as a result of what one hears must be acknowledged. The Socratic method was alive and well in our exchanges, and I did. But, as I've noted, the change came slowly, the process recalling not St. Paul on the road to Damascus but the Latin proverb *Stillicidi casus lapidem cavat*, "constant dripping hollows out a stone." My thought was also significantly influenced by a superb conference on immigration, "Thy People Shall Be My People: Immigration and Citizenship in America," sponsored by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation in July of 2000. Perhaps its principal contribution to challenging my point of view was having the opportunity to listen to my own side's thesis articulated by those willing to take it to its extreme, and their *reductio ad absurdum* made plain the very great dangers within it.

In a rare experiment in candid public discourse about America's changing demography, American Jewry needs to toss reticence and evasion to the winds, stop censoring ourselves for fear of offending the entirely imaginary arbiters of civic virtue, and bluntly and *publicly* pose the same questions we anxiously ponder in private. The community should stop letting the thought police of the more extreme incarnations of multiculturalism squelch it, feel compelled to genuflect in their direction, or unconsciously internalize or be guilt-tripped into validating their identity politics that masquerade as pluralism. By liberating themselves from these inhibitions we will unavoidably profane the altars of some of our own politically correct household gods, including the present liberal/ethnic/corporate orthodoxy on immigration. We will also risk upsetting not a few old friends and allies, and some of the newer ones we're already cultivating.

To whom, one and all, we will need to explain our concerns with patience and empathy. But we should ask the hard questions no matter what, recognizing that only straight talk will get us anywhere. We cannot consider the inevitable consequences of current trends — not least among them *diminished Jewish political power* —

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with detachment. Our present privilege, success, and power do not inure us from the effect of historical processes, and history has not come to an end, even in America. We have an enormous stake in the outcome of this process, and we should start acting as if we understood that we do. A people that lost one-third of its world population within living memory due to its powerlessness cannot contemplate the loss of power with complacency. We rightly ask, "If I am not for myself who will be for me?"

It must be acknowledged from the start that for many decent, progressive Jewish folk merely asking such fundamental questions is tantamount to heresy, and meddling with them is to conjure the devil. But if we hope to persuade the organized Jewish community to adopt a new stance of enlightened self-interest with regard to the immigration debate, a debate that will surely become increasingly bitter, fractious, and politicized in the crudest partisan ways in the days ahead we have little choice. Of equal urgency, and inextricably linked to that debate, is the mission of finding ways to strengthen national unity and social cohesion in America by resuscitating patriotic assimilation under demanding, historically unprecedented circumstances.

This is emphatically not a time for expending much energy worrying about political good manners and seeking to anticipate each and every qualm of our hypersensitive current political allies (I hope soon-to-be former allies), not to mention the reactions of some of our own flock. And we can't afford to continue putting our heads in the sand, appealing as that is. The problem — and there *is* a problem — is not going to go away. Unlike the case with earlier eras of immigration, there appears to be no hiatus in the offing. According to figures just pre-leased from the recent Census, the number of Mexicans who have come to the United States legally and/or illegally has doubled in one decade.

Leaving Inviolate the Historical Holy of Holies

It is critically important to state at the outset that this is neither to wax nostalgic (a culturally inconceivable stance) nor — Heaven forbid — to find redeeming features in the evil, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and Red Menace-based Great Pause in the 1920s that trapped hundreds of thousands of Jews in Europe. My then-teenage father and his brothers, escaping the widespread bloody pogroms taking place throughout the Russian Empire during the civil war that followed the Revolution, were very nearly stranded by it and left to the tender mercies of General "Pogromchik" Petlyura's Russian and Ukrainian Nationalist army. They managed to ship out of Danzig, walking to that Baltic port all the way from a small village outside Kiev, and get in just under the wire before the door slammed shut. Anyone familiar with the national/ethnic quotas that formed the basis for U.S. immigration policy in the years that followed will note not only their vilely discriminatory attitude toward Eastern and Southern Europeans (Jews most prominently), but also that even the tiny quotas allotted these undesirables were rarely met. So extreme was the anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic restrictionist attitude.

America's vast moral failure to offer refuge to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, a story told so powerfully by David S. Wyman in his two books and that of many subsequent historians, can never be forgotten. The story is told in the permanent exhibition of the United States Holocaust Museum, but with less prominence than it deserves, no doubt out of concern for appearing overly critical of the nation on whose national mall the museum stands. While the U.S. administration was fully informed how and where millions were being murdered in Europe, only a handful were grudgingly granted safety here. The story of the ship the *St. Louis* is perhaps the most poignant and widely known instance of this monstrous policy, but scores of Jews seeking refuge could tell equally appalling tales of grotesque treatment. Along with the trade in African slaves and the institution of slavery and the treatment of Native Americans, America's abandonment of the Jews to Nazi annihilation is arguably the greatest moral failure in its history. This shameful, frightening history has formed, as it were, the sacred moral basis for mainstream Jewish support for generous legal immigration.

But Jewish memories of the failure of U.S. refugee policy and a national-origins immigration policy abandoned some 36 years ago should no longer, can no longer, serve as the basis for communal thinking on this issue. We are, in the first instance, not speaking here of refugees from tyranny or oppressed minorities, but of vast numbers of immigrants seeking economic betterment, and, secondly, we are not advocating an anti-immigration position — far from it — but rather a sensible one that is consonant with the American dream. Put simply, what we are advocating is a pro-immigrant policy of lower immigration.

Also, let's confess it: It would be ridiculous to mistake the organized Jewish community's hesitancy to address the subject of the great cultural transformation of America for genuine equanimity. We are, after all, standing on the edge of what is arguably the most profound social transformation in the nation's history. It is a demographic

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transformation that, most experts believe, will result in a majority non-white population sometime before the end of the new century. A new American nation is coming into being before our very eyes, and many in the Jewish world are worried about it; some are even terrified.

For the most part we continue to mouth the traditional policy line affirming generous — really, unlimited — immigration and open borders, though our own constituency is deeply divided on the policy, supports it with diminished enthusiasm, and even our legislative advocates seem to do so without conviction. Doubt has been growing for some years now. For those familiar with the behavior of mainstream Jewish organizations within the landscape of Washington-based coalitions, or for anyone with any mother wit, it is a commonplace that Jews find themselves on the political right with regard to almost any issue one might name on cold days in hell. But this has been regularly the case for at least nearly a decade at meetings of the National Immigration Forum, the key lobbying group for large-scale immigration, a group in which the Jewish organizations present are often alone in opposing what is, in essence, a policy of open borders.

Yet, for the time being, as if on automatic pilot, Jewish organizations repeat the familiar mantras and continue with their uncritical "celebration" of diversity. (Diversity meaning, of course, diversity of race and ethnicity but *not* opinion.) Like sleepwalkers, we instinctively plod along the corridors in the familiar patterns and pursue old-fashioned attempts at "dialogue" with the new constellation of groups while we attempt to get our arms around the New America. (Dialogue frequently being a one-way street where we strive to please our partners at any price, often reinforce stereotypes of Jewish money-grubbing and privilege by promising entrepreneurs of color entrée to business insiders and frequently ask for little in the way of concrete support for our own agenda in return.) Sometimes it also seems as if we're trying to look like value-free sociologists and not give the slightest outward signs of the intense vertigo we're experiencing or the least hint that we may be prepared to reconsider policy. Though we undoubtedly appear green around the gills to those who know us well. For a community that has long advanced an ambitious and unapologetic public agenda, and not infrequently in a rambunctious, in-your-face style, this hesitancy is striking and does not go unnoticed. If unchanged, in the long run it may also prove dangerous.

Of course research and reflection are always necessary prerequisites to policy formation or revision, but does anyone seriously doubt that we also assume this meditative posture because it carries no immediate political risks? And this despite the fact that like Americans of all backgrounds, including a high proportion of fairly recently arrived immigrants, much now going on makes us profoundly uneasy, and we can't remain quiet for much longer. Our concern with not giving offense, for not getting precisely the press we want, should not be allowed to strangle our willingness to speak. There are questions of great moment to which we do not have answers, and we shall never find them if we are afraid even to pose them.

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Also, so long as we remain frozen in an attitude of unwise wise passivity, we treat the new realities as if they were inevitable. We fall into the trap of seeing the reconfiguration of the American sociological, cultural and, perhaps most important for us, political landscape as if it were being carved out by a glacial force of nature before which we were powerless.

The Anti-Democratic Nature of the Determinists

This tacit surrender to determinism — the belief that economically motivated, unceasing immigration on a vast scale is unstoppable because it is due to inexorable global market forces — makes us complicit in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Such surrender also means, ominously, that we have, in effect, accepted the notion that something as momentous as immigration policy — and no public policy arena carries wider implications for the whole of American society — need not, indeed can not, be subject to the democratic will of the American people. Given the rising unpopularity of current policy on immigration and even reports of isolated violence against immigrants nationwide, cutting off democratic channels of redress raises the specter of serious social unrest.

Surrender to the alleged inevitable also makes a mockery of the rule of law, as evidenced by President Bush's recent ill-conceived, transparently political, and ethnically divisive initiative to grant legal status to some or all of the three to four million Mexican illegal immigrants in the United States.

Predictably enough, now comes word the president may compound the error and extend a policy of sanctuary for lawbreakers to illegal immigrants of all backgrounds to satisfy disgruntled new arrivals from other ethnic groups who feel aggrieved. We have come to live within a culture in which illegal immigrants have joined the roster of victims demanding rights, recognition, and recompense; in effect they wish to join the ranks of the only just ethnic recipients of affirmative action: African Americans. Many of the traditional "people of good will" not only find this

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astounding act of collective social gall appropriate, but also view the satisfaction of the demands of illegal aliens as if they constituted moral imperatives. To make matters even worse, not to be outdone by the president's deft pandering to Mexican-Americans, leading Democrats have proposed a significant extension "on humanitarian grounds" of family-reunification policy, a highly questionable approach to the selection of immigrants in the first place.

Where, pray, will all this end? Astonishing data drawn from the 2000 Census indicates that there may be something like nine million illegal residents in the United States. Most people on earth have *nothing*; if they manage to make it to America they will have *something*. But do we really wish to construct immigration policy on the catastrophe of global poverty and chaos, and the breakdown of nation-states around the world that threatens to overwhelm all notions of separate nationhood and erode all borders? An appeal based on global misery can know no boundaries and can make no distinctions. And we must continually bear in mind that the Republicans and Democrats pushing these agendas do not do so out of genuine compassion (where were they during the Rwandan genocide?) but in a shabby public relations battle for the Latino, especially Mexican, vote. And no one imagines that we could afford such compassion economically, or that the American people would stand for such a policy if one were explicitly presented.

Abandoning the Field to Nativism and Xenophobia

Not far down the list of awful consequences, our unspoken acquiescence leaves the anti-determinist camp, with some notable exceptions (such as the thoughtful and moderate Center for Immigration Studies), largely in the hands of classic anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and racist nativist forces. The white "Christian" supremacists who have historically opposed either all immigration or all non-European immigration (Europeans being defined as Nordic or Anglo-Saxon), a position re-asserted by Peter Brimelow, must not be permitted to play a prominent role in the debate over the way America responds to unprecedented demographic change. Nor should the anti-immigrant demagoguery of some black leadership be permitted to go unchallenged. To allow this opens the door to inter-ethnic conflict and a potential white ethnic (and black) backlash of unimaginable proportions, including a potentially large, violent component, especially if the economy continues to sour, joblessness rises sharply, and anti-immigrant attitudes harden.

In good conscience and out of self-interest we must not abandon immigration reform to those who would have kept our forebears out of America, including those sent away to be annihilated in the Holocaust. But our failure to adjust policy to radically changed and changing realities, our continued failure to distinguish refugee policy from immigration policy, and our continued support (at least on paper) of anachronistic and irrelevant positions cedes them center stage and a wide opportunity to do great mischief. We must be willing to revise our positions and re-enter and reinvigorate the debate.

We need to rescue it from the influence of those who understand America not in terms of its abstract constitutional principles, not as embodied in the Bill of Rights, but rather in some Buchananite version of *blut un boden*. It was recently reported in the *Tennessean* that Buchanan's Reform Party has, unsurprisingly enough, made all-out anti-immigration a central plank of its platform, calling for a 10-year moratorium on all immigration. It must be admitted that this attitude clearly resonates with a majority of Americans. Every time representative samples of Americans are presented this option on opinion surveys of all sorts they support it, though usually it is couched in the context of a five-year moratorium. We are not advocating surrender to the thoughtless mob, but we are advocating the design of policy closer to where the American people actually are with regard to the issue, at the same time that we morally educate them to extend the parameters of their sense of community. Here is a good role for the church.

Equally, and more politically awkward for many Jews, we must save the pro-immigration argument from its own most extreme and uncritical proponents. Especially from those who see unchecked illegal immigration from Mexico (in the 1990s the source of one-third of all immigration to the United States and fully 50 percent of illegal immigration) as a brilliant strategy in an undeclared, low-intensity, and thus far remarkably successful war of *Reconquista*. With over 8 percent of Mexico's population already here, and who knows what additional percentage on the way, the notion of a de facto *Reconquista*, especially in the Southwest where the Mexican share of immigration is astronomical, sounds less and less like nativist hyperbole.

It should be added that immigration from the rest of Central and South America and the Caribbean accounts for an additional 23 percent, for a total Hispanic/Caribbean share of 1990s immigration of about 55 percent.

Posing the Sphinx Questions

What are some of those large vexing questions we would prefer not to speak aloud? Let's throw out a few and see how many sleepers we can awaken. The big one for starters: is the emerging new multicultural American nation good for the Jews? Will a country in which enormous demographic and cultural change, fueled by unceasing large-scale non-European immigration, remain one in

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which Jewish life will continue to flourish as nowhere else in the history of the Diaspora? In an America in which people of color form the plurality, as has already happened in California, most with little or no historical experience with or knowledge of Jews, will Jewish sensitivities continue to enjoy extraordinarily high levels of deference and will Jewish interests continue to receive special protection? Does it matter that the majority non-European immigrants have no historical experience of the Holocaust or knowledge of the persecution of Jews over the ages and see Jews only as the most privileged and powerful of white Americans? Is it important that Latinos, who know us almost entirely as employers for the menial low-wage cash services they perform for us (such a blowing the leaves from our lawns in Beverly Hills or doing our laundry in Short Hills), will soon form one quarter of the nation's population? Does it matter that most Latino immigrants have encountered Jews in their formative years principally or only as Christ killers in the context of a religious education in which the changed teachings of Vatican II penetrated barely or not at all? Does it matter that the politics of ethnic succession — colorblind, I recognize — has already resulted in the loss of key Jewish legislators (the brilliant Stephen Solarz of Brooklyn was one of the first of these) and that once Jewish "safe seats" in Congress now are held by Latino representatives?

Far more potentially perilous, does it matter to Jews — and for American support for Israel when the Jewish State arguably faces existential peril — that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States? That undoubtedly at some point in the next 20 years Muslims will outnumber Jews, and that Muslims with an "Islamic agenda" are growing active politically through a widespread network of national organizations? That this is occurring at a time when the religion of Islam is being supplanted in many of the Islamic immigrant sending countries by the totalitarian ideology of Islamism of which vehement anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism form central tenets? Will our status suffer when the Judeo-Christian cultural construct yields, first, to a Judeo-Christian-Muslim one, and then to an even more expansive sense of national religious identity?

It must be added that reliable data on the precise number of Muslims currently living in the United States is extremely difficult to come by. For reasons that appear simultaneously self-evident and self-serving, spokespersons from the organized Muslim community regularly cite the figure of six million Muslims. The number is chosen because it constitutes both a form of demographic riposte to the hated figure of the six million Jewish victims of Nazism that Muslims believe confers vast moral and political advantages on Jews and, secondly, it allows Muslims to claim they have already achieved numerical parity with American Jews. But many demographers and public opinion survey specialists find this figure specious, and place the number far lower. Lower estimates range from three and a half million to as few as two and a half million, with the bulk of the Muslim population being African-American converts to Islam, not immigrant Muslims. We will not chose among these radically differing figures, but only point out that even the lower estimates suggest that given high Muslim immigration Combined with low Jewish fertility and high levels of intermarriage, the rising Muslim population already represents a serious threat to the interests of the American Jewish community, and the danger will only increase with time.

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Does it matter that in a period of unprecedented immigration combined with modern technology (e-mails, phones, and fax) and cheap airfare reinforcing the link between immigrant communities and their homelands in ways inconceivable to previous generations of immigrants, little or nothing is being done in a conscious way to respond? That little or nothing is being actively undertaken to foster loyalty to the United States or a thoughtful adhesion to American values?

Perhaps most important of all, will American constitutional principles and the culture of democratic pluralism — correctly understood by the organized Jewish community as the chief historic bulwarks protecting America's Jews – weather the ethnic and racial reshuffling and continue to guide the nation and maintain its social cohesion?

The current answers to these earthshaking questions are a profound and resounding "maybe," and an equally penetrating and reassuring "Who knows?" We can no longer persist in constructing our policy on sheer ignorance, groundless optimism, upbeat mantras, and sentimental and largely mythological accounts of the acculturation of previous generations of Americans.

These questions would be of enormous consequence at any given historical moment, but how much more than at present when the American Jewish community is arguably enjoying the high noon of its political power and influence, a high noon inevitably followed by a slow western decline. While other ethnic/religious groups grow by leaps and bounds, Jewish fertility is flat, its growth rate zero, and we continue to decrease both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the general population. We have a rapidly aging population; rates of intermarriage that run to nearly 50 percent; no effective strategies to harvest

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intermarried; a religious tradition that eschews the seeking of converts; and triumphant large-scale, full-throttle assimilation into the American cultural landscape is vitiating whatever remains of our separate sense of identity.

Surveys also indicate that younger secular Jews are less and less enamored of or identify with Israel, and that Jewish affiliation with Jewish institutions, including synagogues and religious schools, continues to decline steadily. For many, even gastronomic Judaism is only a memory (sushi, burritos, and curry overwhelm deli). The Jewish content in the lives of most U.S. Jews consists of cheaply exploitative cinematic treatments of the Holocaust, gaudy, lavish and meaningless bar and bat mitzvahs that resemble sweet-16 parties, and television sitcoms in which ostensibly "Jewish" characters are universalized as if they were in witness protection programs.

There is undeniably something of a renaissance among the growing Modern Orthodox community, especially young adults (and, yes, Jewish history has often worked through the "remnant of Israel"), but it is statistically insignificant in terms of the American Jewish future broadly considered. An intensification of Jewish religious identity and observance among an active but small subset does not offset the overall trend, especially within a community that according to every public opinion survey is the least "religious" in the United States. There is also no telling whether this spiritual renewal — which also affects other branches of Judaism and is part of a general religious revival across the spectrum in America — will prove to be enduring or ephemeral. Religious revivals in America frequently turn into short-lived fads. In his brilliant novel *American Pastoral*, Philip Roth plots the trajectory of Jewish acculturation through the transformation of Jewish male names over the generations: Sid fathered Stephen who fathered Sean. Roth forgot the next stage, however; a fair number named Sean have sons named Shlomo, but it is not so clear what Shlomo, son of Sean, will name his *kaddish*.

Facing Up to the Gradual Demise of Jewish Political Power

Not that it is the case that our disproportionate political power (pound for pound the greatest of any ethnic/cultural group in America) will erode all at once, or even quickly. We will be able to hang on to it for perhaps a decade or two longer. Unless and until the triumph of campaign finance reform is complete, an extremely unlikely scenario, the great material wealth of the Jewish community will continue to give it significant advantages. We will continue to court and be courted by key figures in Congress. That power is exerted within the political system from the local to national levels through soft money, and especially the provision of out-of-state funds to candidates sympathetic to Israel, a high wall of church/state separation, and social liberalism combined with selective conservatism on criminal justice and welfare issues.

Jewish voter participation also remains legendary; it is among the highest in the nation. Incredible as it sounds, in the recent presidential election more Jews voted in Los Angeles than Latinos. But should the naturalization of resident aliens begin to move more quickly in the next few years, a virtual certainty — and it should — then it is only a matter of time before the electoral power of Latinos, as well as that of others, overwhelms us.

All of this notwithstanding, in the short term, a number of factors will continue to play into our hands, even amid the unprecedented wave of continuous immigration. The very scale of the current immigration and its great diversity paradoxically constitutes at least a temporary political asset. While we remain comparatively coherent as a voting bloc, the new mostly non-European immigrants are fractured into a great many distinct, often competing groups, many with no love for each other. This is also true of the many new immigrants from rival sides in the ongoing Balkan wars, as it is for the growing south Asian population from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. They have miles and miles to go before they overcome historical hatreds, put aside current enmities and forgive recent enormities, especially Pakistani brutality in the nascent Bangladesh. Queens is no melting pot!

Currently struggling to find a foothold in America, to learn English and to master an advanced technological and pluralistic culture that is largely alien to them, they are predictably preoccupied with issues of simple economic survival at the low end of the spectrum. In terms of public affairs, they are, at most, presently competing for neighborhood political dominance, government subsidies, and local municipal services.

Moreover, the widespread poverty of a high percentage of recent immigrants, an especially strong characteristic of by far the largest group, Mexican Americans, also makes bread and butter issues a far greater priority than a multifaceted public affairs agenda into the foreseeable future. No small consideration, it also arguably makes them a greater drain on the economy than a benefit, a subject of unending dispute between advocates of large-scale immigration and reduced immigration.

While the Mexicans in particular have huge numbers on their side — we sometimes forget that the U.S.-Mexican border is the longest in the world between a first-world and a third-world country — they have little in the way of the economic resources to give them commensurate political clout. And communal wealth formation will be a long time in coming, considering that most Mexican immigrants are peasant class. Also, compared to previous generations of European immigrants,

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they have been slow to naturalize, largely because so many have illegal status, thus effectively barring themselves from becoming a force in electoral politics. But the sleeping giant will surely awaken, and the sort of amnesty contemplated by the Bush administration will make that happen all the sooner. And it *is* a giant. Advance Census data indicate that upwards of 8 percent of Mexico's population already resides in the United States, and the growth of that community shows no sign of abating; the opposite is true. It is simply astounding to contemplate the recent historical rise in Mexican immigration. In 1970, there were fewer than 800,000 Mexican immigrants; 30 years later the number is approaching 9 million, a 10-fold increase in one generation.

For perhaps another generation, an optimistic forecast, the Jewish community is thus in a position where it will be able to divide and conquer and enter into selective coalitions that support our agendas. But the day will surely come when an effective Asian-American alliance will actually bring Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Koreans, Vietnamese, and the rest closer together. And the enormously complex and as yet significantly divided Latinos will also eventually achieve a more effective political federation. The fact is that the term "Asian American" has only recently come into common parlance among younger Asians (it is still rejected by older folks), while "Latinos" or "Hispanics" often do not think of themselves as part of a multinational ethnic bloc but primarily as Mexicans, Cubans, or Puerto Ricans.

Even with these caveats, an era of astoundingly disproportionate Jewish legislative representation *may* already have peaked. It is unlikely we will ever see many more U.S. Senates with 10 Jewish members. And although had Al Gore been allowed by the Supreme Court to assume office, a Jew would have been one heartbeat away from the presidency, it may be we'll never get that close again. With the changes in view, how long do we actually believe that nearly 80 percent of the entire foreign aid budget of the United States will go to Israel?

It is also true that Jewish economic influence and power *are* disproportionately concentrated in Hollywood, television, and in the news industry, theoretically a boon in terms of the formation of favorable public images of Jews and sensitizing the American people to issues of concern to Jews. But ethnic dominance in an industry does not by itself mean that these centers of opinion and attitude formation in the national culture are sources of Jewish political power. They are not noticeably "Jewish" in the sense of advancing a Jewish agenda, Jewish communal interests, or the cause of Israel. And television, the Jewish industry par excellence, with its shallow values, grotesque materialism, celebration of violence, utter superficiality, anti-intellectualism, and sexploitation certainly does not advance anything that might be confused with Jewish values. It is probably true, however, that the situation would be worse in terms of the treatment of Jewish themes and issues in the media without this presence.

We will always be in support of immigration; the question is whether it should be open-ended or not? The question is what constitutes the smartest approach to supporting immigration?

Supporting Immigration by Reducing Its Scale

Before offering specific recommendations about immigration policy, we should immediately anticipate the predictable opposition and state emphatically what we are *not* advocating. We are *not* advocating an anti-immigration position. It would be the height of ingratitude, moral amnesia, and gracelessness for a group that has historically benefited enormously from liberal immigration — as well as suffered enormously from illiberal immigration policies — to be, or to be seen to be, suggesting that we cruelly yank the rope ladder up behind us. It is also, frankly, in our own best interest to continue to support generous immigration. The day may come when the forces of anti-Semitic persecution will arise once more in the lands of the former Soviet Union or in countries of Eastern Europe and Jews will once again need a safe haven in the United States. The Jewish community requires this fail-safe. We will always be in support of immigration; the question is whether it should be open-ended or not? The question is what constitutes the smartest approach to supporting immigration?

We also believe that generous immigration has been and remains one of the greatest strengths of American life for a multitude of reasons, perhaps the chief source of the remarkable social, cultural, and intellectual vitality and continual revitalization that is the byproduct of the periodic reinvention of American society. Along with our constitutional principles, democratic values, ideal of equal opportunity, and free market economy, immigration and the cultural variety it produces is one of the principal engines of our creativity, genius for invention, impatience with outworn ideas, anachronistic social arrangements, and stifling cultural conformity. It is also main source of a deep-seated historic tolerance for diversity.

Which is *not* to say that Americans are ever well inclined toward the present crop of immigrants. We tend to dislike them in present time and only appreciate their virtues in retrospect — usually primarily as foils to compare to the even more repulsive characteristics of the newly

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In many cases, ethnic communal support for new immigrants or patronage of their business establishments are subject to the blessings of atavistic, unassimilated, and anti-pluralistic communal and religious leadership that frequently has a political agenda fundamentally at odds with American values.

unwashed arrivals in a curiously insincere but useful form of social nostalgia. American history is replete with outbreaks of political xenophobia (from the anti-Catholic Know Nothing Party to the America First movement to Buchanan's Reform Party), and racism, in particular, has been our Achilles heel. But all in all, and especially in comparison to the more ethnocentric European and Asian societies, we have a comparatively excellent record with regard to welcoming strangers to our shores *over time*. Time is the *key* factor. We are, to use the well-worn cliché, a nation of immigrants, but acceptance only comes when a critical mass of what are perceived by ordinary Americans as characteristically American cultural norms and attitudes are imbibed and displayed by immigrants in their daily lives.

Also, U.S. world leadership in virtually every area of science, high technology, in the learned professions, and in every sphere of artistic endeavor is the direct result of the vast range of sources of creativity that immigration provides. We are able to draw on distinctive modes of creativity and inspiration from across the entire earth and then liberate it in the free air of America to accomplish all it is capable of achieving. Immigration gives America intellectual, social, and artistic vitality unknown in equal measure anywhere else in the history of the world.

Having made this sincere genuflection to the great good that has come of immigration, in light of unprecedented, ascending challenges, what changes might we contemplate with regard to Jewish advocacy on immigration and immigration-related issues? How should we think about acculturation, assimilation, and an old term we should not be ashamed to resuscitate — Americanization?

For starters, we should give serious, immediate consideration to terminating our alliance with the advocates of open borders — we do not belong in their coalitions — and ally ourselves, instead, with pro-immigration advocates who favor immigration reform that includes moderate reductions in immigration, such as the Center for Immigration Studies. With them, and others, we should support an approach to immigration that restores its good name and helps immigrants make a successful, well-planned transition to American life. These goals are realistic only if the present stratospheric numbers are reduced, criteria for entry are rationalized, and legal and cultural processes of naturalization and acculturation are more efficient and deliberate. Successful immigration is defined in this context first of all as naturalization — acquiring citizenship — and, second, as striking a proper balance between ethnic/cultural group loyalty and a larger sense of national belonging.

Immigration Policy and Identity Politics

Our current policies encourage the balkanization that results from identity politics and the politics of grievance. The high percentage of new immigrants who are poor and uneducated, suffer linguistic handicaps, dizzying cultural disorientation, and possess no competitive skills for a postindustrial labor market remain effectively trapped within the underclass and/or the suffocating and meager support systems offered by their tight tribal enclaves. The numbers simply overwhelm available resources at the state and federal level. The new faith-based initiatives, so questionable from a First Amendment standpoint, potentially troubling in terms of generating sectarian strife over the pursuit of federal dollars, and capable of providing federal government sanction to discrimination, would also be utterly incapable of laying a glove on the problem. That is if — and it is a big if — the program survives the Senate and is found to be constitutional.

Now, none of this would be a problem if we were willing to adopt the Chamber of Commerce/*Wall Street Journal* mentality. That worldview applauds an endless supply of immigrants as desirable in order to fill the bottomless demand for the wretched of the earth to occupy the bowels of the service sector, to suppress U.S. wages overall, and to further weaken the already marginalized American labor movement. But if we are interested in sustaining the American dream of upward mobility and social integration, that vision is both cynical and hopelessly inadequate. According to social analysts from the political left to the political right, the Alan Wolfe thesis tends to find substantial if not solid agreement. American social cohesion and the integrity of its democratic process are faring pretty well but the nation faces one paramount challenge: the growing chasm between the very rich and everyone else. With this large anxiety in mind, and with concerns about creating a workable pluralism in the face of an exploding and increasingly transient immigrant population, does it make sense for America to follow the European model and create a massive underclass of impoverished, alienated, and socially disconnected guest workers? It is hard to imagine that anyone who values social democracy could favor such a solution — but it is becoming a reality on the ground for three reasons: the

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misery of the world's desperately poor, employer greed, and the loss of control of America's borders.

The inability of government to begin to cope with the scale of the problem (whether on the side of policing borders or providing adequate social services) also strengthens the role of the ethnic enclave in addressing it. And the resultant dependence on the religious and cultural institutions within the ethnic communities for sustenance often slows or blocks acculturation, and worse. Within those tight ethnic enclaves, home country allegiances and social patterns endure, old prejudices and hatreds are reinforced, and home-country politics continue to inordinately shape, even control, the immigrant's worldview. In many cases, ethnic communal support for new immigrants or patronage of their business establishments are subject to the blessings of atavistic, unassimilated, and anti-pluralistic communal and religious leadership that frequently has a political agenda fundamentally at odds with American values. This is certainly the case within the Pakistani immigrant community. In many cases, the Old World political party structures, replete with their targeted, self-serving meager handouts, remain powerful.

Breaking these patterns of control exerted by the sending country and promoting acculturation that honors the immigrant's culture and origins but principally foregrounds and nurtures American values can be achieved only by reducing the present overwhelming scale of immigration that thwarts any effort to develop practicable solutions to these problems. As noted earlier, cheap air fares and overseas telephone rates, and the internet permits the home country to exert a strong continuing influence on immigrants that is substantially different from what was the case with previous generations of newcomers. Many new immigrants are and remain, in effect, primarily citizens of their home countries and resident aliens in America, here merely to benefit from American resources and return income to the home country before returning themselves. (There are even cases of immigrants to the United States that hold political office in their home countries!) The present tidal wave of immigration swamps all efforts to promote an active sense of civic partnership, dramatically slows the process of naturalization by taxing the INS and other institutions beyond their capacity to respond, and sustains a meaningless approach to naturalization and citizenship tests. (The citizenship tests with their intellectually lame content constitute a particular disgrace.) It also allows no time and space for one group to begin assimilating before the next wave comes crashing ashore.

Though there has been some progress in recent times, the number of resident aliens not seeking naturalization is enormous. Contrary to popular mythology, it was not unusual for many immigrant European national groups in the great wave of immigration in the nineteenth century and at the turn of that century for large numbers to return home after only a brief sojourn in America. Something like half of the Italians who immigrated to the United States at the turn of the 19th century returned to Italy. Now we have large groups remaining but not naturalizing.

The time may have arrived to advocate a policy that determines that a legal prerequisite for immigration, in the first instance, is a sworn affidavit that the prospective immigrant will seek citizenship at the earliest practicable date, with timeframes rigorously enforced by deporting violators. The bottom line should be up or out. Needless to say, adequate funding must be provided to the INS to handle this process in an orderly and efficient manner. The goal of immigration should be citizenship, an acceptance of the rights and obligations of full participation in the national life, accompanied by an embrace of American political and social values; its goal should not be access to opportunities for better-paying jobs and public benefits, and nothing more.

Trendy Postmodernism Skews the Debate

There are, of course, within the opinion-making set, increasing numbers of trendy philosophical internationalists, mostly privileged academicians protected from real world pressures by tenure, who strenuously object to the notion that one must select and emphasize one aspect of the multiple cultural and national identities human beings possess. Though still a relatively small fraternity, one bumps into them more and more at foundation-sponsored conferences on immigration policy. According to their worldview, such hoary notions as citizenship or whole-hearted assimilation — God forbid patriotism — are historically outmoded, embarrassing concepts. In a shrinking, porous world with huge populations on the move, we are told, they have little to recommend them, and we should feel greater and greater comfort with multiple simultaneous identities, juggling conflicting national and cultural allegiances, and the attenuation of specific national loyalties. Such thinkers not only have no problem with multiple citizenship, but they see it as an ideal, the embodiment of a higher form of global consciousness, the ultimate expression of New Age cosmopolitanism.

The great masses of ordinary humanity across the world have no such perspective: tragically for themselves and for those who are often victimized by them, they continue to be driven by various forms of tribalism, including the most violent and extreme sort. This is true from lethal interethnic clashes in soccer arenas in every continent, and from the mass killing fields of Africa, to

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the killing fields of the Balkans. Ethnocentrism and has proven remarkably enduring into the new millennium; those who counted it out, who thought humanity was ready for some higher notion of fraternity, have been shown to have been utterly mistaken in their predictions. Ethnocentrism is the undisputed world champion.

The great masses, increasingly on the move, are also driven by economic necessity, especially the billions living in dire poverty. For better or for worse, these people have no coherent global ideology about supplanting the tribe or the nation; they don't have the luxury to sit back and expound on such themes. But there is a cadre of dilettantes with academic and law degrees who proffer a postmodern philosophy that sees the nation state, even open ones with pluralistic values, as an anachronism. They constitute an intellectual cheering section for the breakdown of law, historical notions of what makes for nation states and civil society, civic traditions, the violation of the sanctity of borders that once commanded unquestioned assent, and use a term like patriotism only jokingly. They lend the present crisis the veneer of a conceptual breakthrough.

Jews and Identity Politics

We Jews need to be especially sensitive to the multinational model this crowd (many of them Jewish) is promoting. Why? Because one person's "celebration" of his own diversity, foreign ties, and the maintenance of cultural and religious traditions that set him apart is another's balkanizing identity politics. We are not immune from the reality of multiple identities or the charge of divided loyalties, a classic staple of anti-Semitism, and we must recognize that our own patterns are easily assailed, and we need to find ways of defending them more effectively as the debate goes on. Much public opinion survey research undertaken in recent years continues to indicate that large numbers of Americans, particularly people of color, assert that Jews are more loyal to Israel than the United States.

For Jews, it is at best hypocritical, and, worse, an example of an utter lack of self-awareness, not to recognize that we are up to our necks in this problem. This has been especially true once we were sufficiently accepted in the United States to feel confident enough to go public with our own identity politics. But this newfound confidence carries its own costs; people are observing us closely, and what they see in our behavior is not always distinct from what we loudly decry in others. One has to be amused, even amazed, when colleagues in the organized Jewish world wring their hands about black nationalism, Afrocentrism, or with cultural separatism in general — without considering Jewish behavioral parallels. Where has our vaunted Jewish self-awareness flown?

I'll confess it, at least: like thousands of other typical Jewish kids of my generation, I was reared as a Jewish nationalist, even a quasi-separatist. Every summer for two months for 10 formative years during my childhood and adolescence I attended Jewish summer camp. There, each morning, I saluted a foreign flag, dressed in a uniform reflecting its colors, sang a foreign national anthem, learned a foreign language, learned foreign folk songs and dances, and was taught that Israel was the true homeland. Emigration to Israel was considered the highest virtue, and, like many other Jewish teens of my generation, I spent two summers working in Israel on a collective farm while I contemplated that possibility. More tacitly and subconsciously, I was taught the superiority of my people to the gentiles who had oppressed us. We were taught to view non-Jews as untrustworthy outsiders, people from whom sudden gusts of hatred might be anticipated, people less sensitive, intelligent, and moral than ourselves. We were also taught that the lesson of our dark history is that we could rely on no one.

I am of course simplifying a complex process of ethnic and religious identity formation; there was also a powerful counterbalancing universalistic moral component that inculcated a belief in social justice for all people and a special identification with the struggle for Negro civil rights. And it is no exaggeration to add that in some respects, of course, a substantial subset of secular Jews were historically Europe's cosmopolitans par excellence, particularly during the high noon of bourgeois culture in Central Europe. That sense of commitment to universalistic values and egalitarian ideals was and remains so strong that in reliable survey research conducted over the years, Jews regularly identify "belief in social justice" as the second most important factor in their Jewish identity; it is trumped only by a "sense of peoplehood." It also explains the long Jewish involvement in and flirtation with Marxism. But it is fair to say that Jewish universalistic tendencies and tribalism have always existed in an uneasy dialectic. We are at once the most open of peoples and one second to none in intensity of national feeling. Having made this important distinction, it must be admitted that the essence of the process of my nationalist training was to inculcate the belief that the primary division in the world was between "us" and "them." Of course we also saluted the American and Canadian flags and sang those anthems, usually with real feeling, but it was clear where our primary loyalty was meant to reside.

I am also familiar with the classic, well-honed answer to this tension anytime this phenomenon is cited: Israel and America are both democracies; they share values; they have common strategic interests; loyalty to one cannot conceivably involve disloyalty to the other, etc., etc. All of which begs huge questions, including an American strategic agenda that extends far beyond Israel, and while it may be true in practice most of the time, is by no means an absolute construct, devoid of all sort of potential exceptions. I say

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all this merely to remind us that we cannot pretend we are only part of the solution when we are also part of the problem; we have no less difficult a balancing act between group loyalty and a wider sense of belonging to America. That America has largely tolerated this dual loyalty — we get a free pass, I suspect, largely over Christian guilt about the Holocaust — makes it no less a reality.

At the very least, as the debate over multinational identity rises, I hope the Jewish community will have the good sense *not* to argue in favor of dual citizenship and other such arrangements. I would also advocate that those who possess dual citizenship to relinquish it in order not to cloud the issue and to serve the best interests of the American Jewish community and of American national unity. The recent case of the Israeli teenager who committed a murder in suburban Maryland (his victim was a young Latino) and fled to Israel, where he was permitted to remain despite attempts at extradition by U.S. prosecutors, with considerable congressional support, must never be repeated. That incident inflicted serious damage on Israel's good name, and it shapes the public's perception of Jews as people in a special category with additional rights who have a safe haven where they can escape the reach of American justice.

Promoting Patriotic Assimilation and Reviving Civic Virtue

In addition to greater Jewish self-consciousness of our standing, as well as stake, within the unfolding drama, there are specific programs and policies we should advance to promote patriotic assimilation, to see that in the scales that balance group loyalty with national allegiance, patriotism to America weighs more heavily. As part of our advocacy regarding the reform of public education, we should make a strong case for the revival of civic education as part of the core curriculum for all students, not only recent arrivals. Levels of political awareness among young people, just like levels of participation by adults in the electoral process, have become a scandal in the United States. For most Americans, truth to tell, were the Bill of Rights rescinded tomorrow, it would make no material difference in their lives. Freedom of choice and individual rights in America remain sacrosanct principles, but they appear to operate almost exclusively in the context of consumer choice; rather than political loyalties we have brand loyalty. All of America would benefit by a renewed education in civic values and participation, not simply the newcomers. We ought to know something about what we profess to believe in.

Also in the interest of advancing the concept of *E Pluribus Unum*, Jewish organizations should cease their well-intentioned but groundless support for bilingual education, switch sides in the debate, and come roaring in as strong opponents. Our opposition to bilingual education ought to rest primarily on symbolic grounds rather than on educational ones, though common sense, as manifested in the huge majorities of Spanish-speaking parents polled on this question who wish their children to be mainstreamed into classes taught in English, should not be ignored. Data on the efficacy of bilingual education is inconclusive; clearly much of it is dreadful, though some programs in some locales appear to yield good results when they function as brief way stations on the road to integrating students into classes taught in English.

But there is an overriding importance in sending the message that we have a lingua franca in the United States, and it is English. It is also the language of our great founding documents. It is particularly important to stress this point given the undeclared war of *Reconquista* that is being waged by Latino nationalists. Of course the usual separatist ethnic political leadership cadre that pretends to speak for their communities of origin supports bilingual education, largely for political reasons. The alleged embarrassment of recent immigrants and the emotional difficulties of school-age kids mask another agenda. That agenda is a mission to displace English as the cornerstone of a larger educational orientation towards Western/European civilization. They see that traditional orientation in paranoid fashion promoting an evil Anglo-Saxon, Euro-centric cultural hegemony at the expense of the cultures of people of color and indigenous people (also always of color). I find such claptrap beneath contempt, but it must be recognized that this is the essence of that debate from the standpoint of ethnic leadership.

In addition to opposing bilingual education (I would stop, however, at making English an "official language" because most of those that promote it reek of xenophobia) there are other concrete steps to consider in an effort to build one nation at a time of unprecedented, culturally discordant immigration. It may be time to reconsider the institution of mandatory national non-military service, both to foster the social and cultural integration of all American young people who effectively live in a society of informal residential apartheid, and to rekindle a sense of service to the nation. The notion that Generation X young people are mostly selfish and acquisitive, and have shallow values and little sense of obligation to anything beyond their own pleasure and material advancement is so widespread as to constitute a body of credible received wisdom. It is also widely held — especially by the more politically active and selfless among the Generation X'ers — that most of their contemporaries have little or no sense of communal responsibility and little or no interest in current public issues. The ethical lapses of public figures widely reported in the press provide (they have *always* provided) the

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standard excuse for young people not to become involved. Frighteningly uninformed (few read newspapers, listen to news on television, or follow larger social trends), they express a cynicism born of nothing other than laziness and selfishness. And unlike the generation of the 1960s, they have no public issue that forcibly enters their lives and dictates some form of political response.

At the same time, we live in an era when upwards of 17 percent of American children live in poverty and, for all the talk of educational reform, schools in many places, especially America's inner cities, are in disastrous shape. The elderly uninsured, numbering in the millions, lead lives of quiet desperation, and cutbacks in government social services have dumped hundreds of thousands of the mentally ill onto the nation's streets or into miserable single-room occupancy apartments where they live lives of excruciating loneliness and hopelessness. Across the nation, impoverished single mothers need help with child care, and school children, especially from single parent homes, need adult mentors and role models, especially males. And environmental degradation is a problem across the country. We could continue to enumerate the opportunities for service almost ad infinitum. These realities provide more than enough opportunity, not to mention a moral imperative, for young persons to devote one to two years of their lives helping their fellow Americans. From involvement in such programs, especially in the company of young new immigrants, native-born Americans would develop a greater sense of public spiritedness as they mature morally. And they would also have the opportunity to get to know new Americans and learn from the drive and persistence so many recent immigrants exhibit in the face of great odds.

Promoting the Concept of Western Civil Society Within Immigrant Enclaves

Another initiative to consider is one aimed at developing concepts of Western civil society within the new immigrant communities. A major problem to address is the fact that the great majority of today's immigrants come from countries with no historical experience of democratic pluralism; instead, their homelands had authoritarian governments, strong traditions of ethnic and religious conformity, and little respect for the rights of ethnic, religious, and political minorities. And many come from societies with no tradition of church/state separation. While some immigrants are refugees from minority communities, most are members of the dominant culture. The new immigrants come to America not as freethinking individualists with open perspectives but as thoroughly socialized citizens who often unquestioningly reflect the norms and values of their native lands; they know no others. Many immigrants are past school age so that public education, including a proposed renewed emphasis on civic education, at present a reality for no one, would still bypass them. Certainly no one could make a credible argument that the absurdly random bits and pieces of knowledge (for the most part historical trivia) that immigrants must learn to pass a citizenship test constitute anything approaching a meaningful learning experience.

The new immigrants did not learn American political and social values at home, and, for the most part, they remain within a cultural frame of mind that does not even recognize their importance. They do not feel its lack. They came to the Unites States primarily to escape economic privation, not to flee tyranny or religious persecution. Immigrants from politically corrupt and authoritarian Mexico, brutal, dictatorial China, and the police states and fascist theocracies that comprise virtually every society within the Muslim world all fall into this category. It is incumbent on government at the state and local levels, ideally with the generous support of the corporate and foundation sectors, to develop large-scale and long-lasting initiatives to build understanding of and respect for Western ideals of civil society in the new immigrant communities. Without such ambitious initiatives, it may take more than one generation to break the stranglehold of the Old World.

The Special Problem of Muslim Immigration and the Rise of Islamism

Apart from the loss of political power that will inevitably result over time from the sweeping demographic reconfiguration of the American social landscape, undoubtedly the greatest immediate threat to the well being of the American Jewish community and its interests stems from large-scale immigration from the Muslim world. The events of September 11 that have forever altered the nature of ordinary life in America, and have shattered the happy illusion of American invulnerability, make the current immigration policy supported by many Jewish organizations appear not merely as the height of irresponsibility, but as irrationally, almost criminally self-destructive.

The special problem of large-scale Muslim immigration to the United States derives primarily from the worldwide ascent of Islamism (often referred to as "fundamentalism" and increasingly "Jihadism"), a totalitarian political ideology with strong theocratic and fascistic elements that is proving enormously compelling to millions of Muslims across the globe. It is without a doubt the most powerful ideological force in the Islamic world, including among Muslims in the United States.

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Islamism is profoundly hostile to pluralism, religious tolerance, democracy, secular civil society, Jews, Zionism, Israel, and to the United States, "the Great Satan." It is a movement that festers and spreads in the impoverished conditions within corrupt regimes, often in response to the venality, inhumanity, and tyranny of local "secular" regimes. It expresses itself through violent populist agitation, intolerant religiosity, irrational atavistic values, misogyny, large-scale terrorism, resentment toward and hatred of everything perceived as "foreign," and pie-in-the-sky theology.

Certainly contemporary Islamism is, in part, a religious response to what many Muslims regard as the "catastrophe" of the founding of Israel. Going back further in time and viewing the movement more broadly, it is a deep-seated cultural reaction to Islam's sociopolitical, technological, and military defeat at the hands of the West. That defeat has been manifested in a variety of ways, but chiefly in the Islamic world's past conquest by Western and Russian colonialism and its loss of the race to modernity and prosperity. It has been left behind historically, underdeveloped and relatively powerless, while the West has developed mass democratic industrial, technocratic consumer societies. In short, Islamism is perhaps the most important and urgent example in the contemporary world of the politics of cultural despair.

But while it has particular roots in the Arab Middle East (Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood being one of the first incarnations), the Islamist movement has spread to the far ends of the vast Islamic patrimony. Thus the movement expresses itself not only in the suicide bombers of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, or the Lebanese Hezbollah that targets Israelis, but also in the ideology of the Muslim insurgents in Southern Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The movement holds absolute power in Afghanistan, the Sudan, and in Iran (if with decreasing enthusiasm among the young), and is gaining steadily in Pakistan (whose intervention in Afghanistan is turning on itself, transforming Pakistan into an extension of Afghanistan). As a result of the strings attached to Saudi economic aid to impoverished Bangladesh, that nation born in blood with the aspiration to form a secular society, is becoming increasingly Islamist in orientation. The movement also poses a direct danger to the newly independent Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, has profited from the war in Chechnya, and has growing influence in Malaysia. It has represented a chronic historic threat to the Egyptian regime, and is in an almost inconceivably brutal contest for power in Algeria. While the Islamist movement is carefully monitored *within* "conservative" Saudi Arabia, which brooks no political opposition to the regime or potentially subversive religiosity, the Saudis, with untold oil wealth, are the major financial backers of this movement worldwide. It is not merely Osama bin Laden who uses his inheritance of $350 million to promote global fundamentalism, including the terrorism associated with it: it is the Saudi regime itself. And all the while Saudi Arabia presents itself as a "moderate" regime and historic friend of the United States.

The great danger Islamism poses to the United States in particular, its savage hatred of America and American values, are impossible to overstate. Islamism is a monster capable of the most despicable and atrocious acts of violence against its perceived enemies. This reality has now been experienced and witnessed directly by the American people in the horrific events of September 11: the destruction of the World Trade Center, the attack on the Pentagon, and a failed attempt to blow up the White House, with a death toll topping 6,000. These crimes of mass murder, most probably the work of Islamist terrorists operating with state support in Islamist Afghanistan, is the worst single act of terrorism on American soil in the history of the United States. It is also one of the greatest single assaults on innocent human life in modern world history carried out in the name of religion. The tragic enormity beggars the imagination. Recently, the anti-Islamist Pakistani émigré newspaper *Pakistan Today* featured on its cover a group of Islamists, their faces covered, aiming rocket-propelled grenades and carrying a sign that read "America, we are coming." They have come; they are here among us. And there is no reason to believe these enormities are the last we will witness, even in the near future.

Also deeply troubling is the fact that the Islamist movement finds critical support in the United States through a series of organizations such as the American Muslim Alliance, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, the Council on America-Islamic Relations, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the American Muslim Council. These groups front as anti-discrimination organizations supposedly concerned principally with protecting the rights and sensitivities of Muslims and Muslim immigrants. Their main agenda, however, is to exert ideological control over the American Muslim community and to prevent its acculturation and assimilation. (It should be pointed out that while the plurality of American Muslims hail from the subcontinent — India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh — the leadership of these organizations tends to be Middle Eastern, often Palestinian or fellow travelers involved in the Palestinian struggle against Israel.)

These organizations function as advocates, recruiters, fundraisers, and lobbyists on behalf of Islamist causes abroad, in recent times especially on behalf of their ilk in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Balkans, Central Asia, and in the ceaseless struggle to destroy Israel. It is their extremism that creates the very negative stereotypes of Muslims they decry and accuse others of foisting upon them. Their venom in response to outside queries and

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These groups front as anti-discrimination organizations. Their main agenda, however, is to exert ideological control over the American Muslim community.

criticism, continual raising of the red herring of Islamophobia, orchestration of fatwas by foreign mullahs against independent Muslim thinkers (the case of the scholar Khalid Durán is a recent example), and their militant international agenda stereotype Muslims as violent, intolerant, and repressive.

That Jewish groups should remain stout defenders of an uncritical immigration and visa policy that allows for the open-ended entry of Muslim fundamentalists to the United States and then provides government agencies no means of keeping track of them is self-defeating to the point of being suicidal. (It should be pointed out that many of the suspects recently arrested in association with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon entered the United States from Saudi Arabia with legal visas.)

It must also be pointed out, regrettably, that to date, few American Muslims have come forward to challenge the self-proclaimed leadership role of these organizations, and there is thus no way to ascertain how representative these groups genuinely are. It must be admitted it is not easy to oppose them in the tight and often repressive world of immigrant communities, where economic survival is often achieved at the cost of political conformity, but change *is* beginning, although the new forces are at present no more than embryonic. Still, anti-Islamist Muslims are increasingly seeking and finding each other (the web is proving an excellent meeting place) and anti-Islamist organizations of Muslim independents and freethinkers are just beginning to spring up. But theirs is a long road, and they have only begun their work. It is also to be hoped that sometime in the future, the more pluralistic and spiritually open Muslim Sufi religious community, represented in hundreds of mosques across the United States, will find the courage to break openly with the current self-appointed leadership in the Muslim community.

At the risk of being labeled the fool who rushes in where angels fear to tread, it must also be acknowledged that classic Islam itself, the traditional faith — and not the hideous political ideologies derived from it — is itself not unproblematic in its attitudes towards Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims. The religious education of traditional, non-Islamist Muslims — literalism in Koranic exegesis, theological straightjackets imposed on scriptual interpretation, the study of text without context, and the virtual absence of intellectual self-critique — is filled with anti-Jewish teaching as well as a theology of contempt for the followers of other faiths. It is the case that fellow monotheists have been historically accorded at least official second-class status (an advance over the treatment accorded others, such as Hindus, Buddhists, or Bahais, for example). But this condition is far removed from anything resembling authentic mutual respect and recognition of the equality of religious claims or commensurate spiritual authenticity.

Powerful strains of religious triumphalism and religious supercessionism are central tenets of Islam. Such dangerous spiritual arrogance has been abandoned by many Christian denominations, largely as a product of Vatican II and years of interfaith dialogue and soul-searching encounter. Christian believers, from Roman Catholics to members of such liberal Protestant denominations as the Congregationalists and the United Church of Christ, have for example, adopted the view that God's covenantal relationship with the Jewish people remains unbroken and that the advent of Christianity neither erased nor cancelled it. (In the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention forms a sad exception to this changed perspective, as do the traditional attitudes of several Orthodox Christian national churches.) No parallel spiritual generosity exists in Islam. While Muslims are prepared to offer the passing genuflection to Jesus or prominent figures in the Hebrew bible, the tone is one of enormous condescension. Muslim friends reared in traditional Islam in such countries as Pakistan and Bangladesh tell me it is impossible for a Muslim who remains in the mainstream of his religious background not to be an anti-Semite.

On a more hopeful note, it is not impossible that Islam itself, as well as its attitude toward Judaism, will undergo a profound change in America. In the United States, many religions have become more open, tolerant, and pluralistic — but the process will take time, it will be hampered by the continuing pull of homeland politics and culture, and it will require the emancipation of the Muslim community from its traditional leadership. At this point, the kind of radical reformation required with regard to Koranic interpretation makes any advocate of such a change an apostate, a marked man. Similarly, any advocate of Islam's spiritual equality with Christianity and Judaism, as opposed to superiority, would be seen as a heretic whose blood should be shed.

In the wake of the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings, there have been countless exhortations from public figures ranging from President Bush to religious leaders, political figures, and police officials not to scapegoat all American Muslims and to protect them from reprisals. Of course such exhortations are timely and necessary. But far more questionable have been the continual references by politicians, clergy, and the self-proclaimed "people of good will" to "our common religious heritage,"

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and the repetition, *ad nauseum*, of the mantra that "true Islam" does not practice or preach violence and hatred. As any one even vaguely acquainted with the Koran knows, numerous Surahs preach hatred and violence and call for ruthless war against unbelievers in the name of Allah. This is not a distortion of Islam; this is the language of its most sacred text. And it is but a short step from classic Islamic supremacism and supercessionism to hatred, a short step from the belief that one's own faith possesses absolute truth to the readiness to inflict violence, even death, on those who chose to stand outside it. For American Muslims, this should be a time of profound soul-searching, a time to re-evaluate the fundamentals of the faith in light of where they have tragically led the faithful. But one sees scant sign this is taking place. To the contrary, we are continually reassured by Muslim Jihadist supporters (who recently have cleverly toned down their strident websites) that Islam is a religion of peace and told by (mostly) well-meaning and ill-informed Christian partners in dialogue with Islam that we must not confuse Islamism with Islam. Authentic believers in and practitioners of inter-religious dialogue must now come forward and with rare courage and painstaking honesty call for a radical reformation of Islam's moral vision of the "other," while Muslims, religious leaders, and ordinary folk alike, must confront the spiritual arrogance that deforms their faith and begets violence.

The Jewish community's role in confronting the rise of Islam in America is (at least) fivefold. We must (1) seek to expose the real nature of our Islamist enemies, (2) attempt to support the emerging free thinkers within the Muslim community, and (3) work assiduously against Islamist political agendas, even as we seek (4) to reduce prejudice against Muslim immigrants. But, again, (5) we should be seeking reductions in the number of immigrants from Islamist societies given their enormous antipathy to Israel, Jews, America, and the West in general. And we should be especially vigilant in opposing the admission of those Islamists seeking asylum from political repression in countries where secularist governments in such places as Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, etc. are struggling against attempts to overthrow them by Islamist religious fanatics. It is nothing less than monstrous that the planners of the first bombing of the World Trade Center and the would-be perpetrators of other terrorist acts often entered this country with refugee status.

Does all this mean we should turn our backs on our longstanding commitment in favor of generous legal immigration or become pessimistic about America's ability to socialize the fresh crop of newcomers into acceptance of American norms and values? Does this mean that we favor one ethnic/racial configuration of American citizenry over another? The answer to both is a resounding *no.* What it does mean, however, is that our support needs to be more qualified, more nuanced, and that we should recognize that immigration that is unprecedented in its scale and unceasing intensity is neither good for immigrants nor good for the United States. The experience of the immigrant under present circumstances is often disastrous and American social cohesion and notions of economic justice are seriously challenged. We should bring the numbers down to more manageable levels, do far more to integrate immigrants into mainstream American life, and inculcate the values of American civil society in immigrant communities. As Jews we also have special concerns regarding the rising Muslim presence, particularly the ascent of Islamism, and we should be unashamed in pursuing our interests.

The Ultimate Conundrum

Finally, I confess that I suspect that MTV, for better of for worse, will prove more powerful with young Muslim immigrants than the mullahs, and that the remarkable material and cultural attractiveness of American life will cause the new immigrants to follow (mostly) in the footsteps of their predecessors. Free of Old World constraints, most new arrivals will in time choose individual freedom over subservience to outworn forms and will opt for the rights of individual conscience over traditional sources of religious and political authority.

But the process will be more difficult, and internal and external resistance to the socialization of the new immigrants is and will remain far stronger than in the past. While we are right to remain hopeful in the long run, we should also be profoundly concerned about life in the short- and mid-term. It is reasonable to be generally optimistic that all will come right in the end, but we must acknowledge that this outcome is hardly a certainty. We have even noted that some "cutting edge" thinkers no longer accept that assimilation represents a desirable goal or that loyalty to one's country constitutes a positive virtue. That leaves plenty of room for doubt, far too much regarding a matter of such great moment, and certainly enough to cause us to consider major modifications in our immigration policy now. Conservative risk-assessment suggests, nay, it demands that we rethink major components of our current open-ended approach to immigration, and that we do so before we will have become complicit, through action or inaction, in a fait accompli that may have dire implications for Jews and for America.

Backgrounders are intended to spur public debate and promote the development of better policy. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Center for Immigration Studies or its funders. They are available on line free of charge at http://www.cis.org

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Backgrounder

The Jewish Stake in America's Changing Demography

Reconsidering a Misguided Immigration Policy

By Stephen Steinlight

This piece is the fruit of an authentic and deeply felt conversion experience, but much as one hankers to grab the reader's attention with a dramatic retelling of a great and sudden epiphany, it didn't happen that way. My change of heart, of thought, came gradually, even reluctantly. It was the product of a long evolution, one that occurred incrementally and unevenly over the years I spent as an advocate in the immigration debate who came increasingly to doubt and now, finally, to disown his own case and cause. The conversion is also the result of the consumption of many books and monographs on many aspects of the issue, as well as my own reflections on the innumerable (and often interminable) coalition meetings and conferences I attended on the subject.Writing in the immediate wake of the nightmare America has experienced (I live in Manhattan and watched the second plane strike the World Trade Center), it must be added that the enormities committed by Islamist terrorists in my city, Washington, and Pennsylvania have given these thoughts greatly increased emotional urgency. But they developed unremarkably, slowly, steadily.

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